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ABSTRACT

The International Resource Management program enables undergraduate students of the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, College of Natural Resources to complete an academic minor in International Resource Management. The program attempts to alert students and faculty to global environmental issues and their interconnectedness with a variety of human enterprises. The program covers the history, causes, and nature and extent of resource depletion; traditional and innovative mechanisms to correct present trends; and organizational aspects of international development. Students are exposed to a combination of educational experiences such as foreign language training, work or study abroad, and a set of technical and general subjects to prepare them for possible volunteer and work assignments abroad. It is felt that the program meets a growing need for individuals with concern for global environmental issues and skills to deal intellectually and practically with environmental problems. Through cooperation with Partners of the Americas, an effort is being made to connect these educational efforts with actual development activities in Wisconsin's partner state, Nicaragua. (JDD)

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PART A

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

ABSTRACT

The CNR, UWSP recently implemented an innovative undergraduate program in International Resource Management, which attempts to alert students and faculty to environmental issues in the Third World, while emphasizing the interrelatedness of North and South, developed and developing. Students are exposed to a combination of educational experiences such as foreign language training, work or study abroad, and a crucial set of technical and general subjects, which prepare them for possible volunteer and work assignments abroad.

The educational component of this program is increasingly tied together with a developmental effort in Wisconsin's Partner (of the Americas) State Nicaragua. Through institutional linkages involving student and faculty exchange with Nicaragua, joint research and workshops, the International Resource Management program intends to internationalize here and there, educationally and in "grass roots" fashion developmentally.

INTRODUCTION

The College of Natural Resources (CNR) at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point (UWSP), has since 1972 conducted international environmental study programs in Europe, and subsequently in Costa Rica and in Australia. In response to increasing needs and opportunities for natural resource managers in the tropics, it recently implemented an academic minor in International Resource Management, the first undergraduate program of its kind in North America.

BACKGROUND

While environmental news such as the depletion of tropical forests and their associated variety of life forms, massive erosion and desertification of fragile lands or disastrous flooding increasingly reaches the American public, their impact and interconnectedness may all too often be eclipsed by numerous other social, political or economic causes and issues of the day. As a result, the public often overlooks the very fundamental truth that rapidly increasing numbers of people are competing for rapidly diminishing natural and other resources in many parts of the world.

While these issues can be ignored, and dismissed as out of one's sphere of interest or influence, travelers abroad are often alarmed by observing the human misery resulting from clashes in demographic and resource trends. Unlike the general public, these travelers also become aware of the fact that these problems cannot be regionalized indefinitely, i.e. that their repercussions will eventually be felt in other, including their own parts of the world.

DESCRIPTION

The International Resource Management program at UWSP is designed to promote awareness of global environmental issues, and their interconnectedness with a variety of human enterprises. Included in its teaching portion are the history, root causes, nature and extent of resource depletion, traditional or innovative mechanisms to slow or correct present trends, and organizational aspects of international development. By providing students with the necessary combination of technical skills (tropical resource management, geography, international economics etc.), language training and foreign experience, they are prepared for possible overseas volunteer or other work experiences, quite aside from becoming effective as messengers for greater global sensitivity.

Through a variety of choices and variable credit requirements, this program can flexibly accomodate students of different backgrounds. At this time not only natural resource students are enrolled, but also biology, foreign language and international studies majors. With greater publicity, the segment of non-resource majors is likely to increase.

The program was recently developed by its present coordinator largely as a sabbatical project, with minimum cost to the university and without outside funding. Its consolidation and possible expansion will necessitate release time and other funding mechanisms.

RESULT

The International Resource Managment minor at UWSP, was apparently introduced as a very timely innovation. To date it has attracted more than 30 students, and other educational institutions have begun to put together similar offerings. Besides attracting the attention of students, several faculty members at the CNR have begun to internationalize themselves (such as by tackling foreign languages), and by incorporating global environmental issues in their classes, research and consulting. They will join an increasing number of colleagues who have already had involvements abroad.

Through cooperation with the Partners of the Americas, an effort is presently made to connect an initially purely educational effort with actual development activities in Wisconsin's partner state Nicaragua. This cooperation will involve formal linkages with partner institutions in that country (student and faculty exchange; internships; workshops; consultations etc.), and potentially the development of a field station.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on limited experience with development of an academic minor in International Resource Management, it appears that this program meets a growing need for individuals with concern for global environmental issues and skills to deal intellectually and practically with related problems. In light of the accelerating clash between growing numbers of people and diminishing resources, programs of this kind need to be implemented much more widely to reach the greatest number of students, and through ripple effects also their consorts. Universities can facilitate that process, by providing funding and other incentives for the development of similar programs.